

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L USNATO 1055

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR PINR NATO UR

SUBJECT: BREZHNEV

REF: USNATO 0955

AT FEBRUARY 25 POLADS, BRITISH REP (MARGETSON) READ FROM A REPORT OF UK IMPRESSIONS OF BREZHNEV DURING PRIME MINISTER WILSONS RECENT MOSCOW VISIT. (MARGETSONS REPORT SUPPLEMENTED BRIEFING BY SIR JOHN KILLICK TO FEBRUARY 20 NAC-- REFTEL). FOLLOWING IS VERBATIM TEXT OF UK REPORT, WHICH UK DELEGATION HAS GIVEN US IN STRICT CONFIDENCE. MISSION REQUESTS ADDRESSEES PROTECT TEXT.

BEGIN TEXT:

1. DURING THE PRIME MINISTERS VISIT TO MOSCOW, BREZHNEV PARTICIPATED IN THREE SESSIONS OF TALKS LASTING SOME SEVEN HOURS. AT THE KREMLIN LUNCH, HE DELIVERED A SPEECH LASTING 40 MINUTES INCLUDING INTERPRETATION.

2. HE DELIVERED THE SPEECH WITHOUT HESITATION AND WITH FORCE. HIS VOICE WAS STRONG.

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3. DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS , HE SPOKE WITH LESS FLUENCY AND ENERGY; BUT HE BECAME ANIMATED WHEN THE DISCUSSION INTERESTED HIM PARTICULARLY. HE PERHAPS SLURRED HIS WORDS A LITTLE MORE NOTICABLY THAN BEFORE HIS SIX WEEK

ABSENCE. BUT HE DID NOT SEEM UNFIT OR PARTICULARLY TIRED.
HIS COLOUR WAS GOOD.

4. THERE WERE A FEW SIGNS OF POSSIBLE HEALTH PROBLEMS.
BREZHNEV SEEMED TO TIRE QUITE QUICKLY. HE DISPLAYED
LITTLE APPETITE AT THE KREMLIN LUNCH. HE SEEMED VERY
READY TO ACCEPT ALCOHOLIC DRINKS. HE SMOKED CIGARETTES AT THE
RATE OF PERHAPS 50 A DAY AND WAS STILL USING HIS
CIGARETTE CASE WITH A TIME DEVICE. HE OFTEN CLEARED HIS
THROAT. HE FREQUENTLY HELD HIS HAND IN FORNT OF HIS
MOUTH. ABOVE ALL HE VERY FREQUENTLY MOISTENED HIS LIPS
AND SEEMED TO BE SUFFERING DISCOMFORT FROM DRYNESS IN THE
MOUTH.

5. A SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL REMARKED DURING
THE VISIT THAT BREZHNEV HAD BEEN SUFFERING FROM SOME
PROBLEM ON THE LEFT SIDE OF HIS JAW. THE SOVIET
AMBASSADOR IN LONDON SUGGESTED THAT THERE WAS PERHAPS
SOME TROUBLE WITH BREZHNEVS TEETH. IT SEEMS VERY
LIKELY THAT SOMETHING IS,OR HAS BEEN, WRONG ABOUT THE
MOUTH. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO SAY WHAT. THERE IS NO
EXTERNAL SCAR BETRAYING A RECENT OPERATION.

6. OVERALL BREZHNEV GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF BEING IN
REMARKABLLY GOOD FORM FOR A MAN OF 68 WHO RECENTLY (AS
NOW ADMITTED) HAD FLU. ON HEALTH GROUNDS HE LOOKS LIKE
A MAN WHO COULD BE AROUND FOR QUITE A TIME.

7. POLITICALLY TOO HE SEEMED STRONG. HE HAD MASTERED
HIS BRIEFS. HE WAS FULL OF CONFIDENCE. OTHER SOVIET
LEADERS DEFERRED TO HIM MARKEDLY. HE ONCE REFERRED TO
"MY MINISTERS". THE MEDIA COVERAGE OF HIS APPEARANCES
DURING THE VISIT WAS VERY EXTENSIVE AND PROMINENT.

8. THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT HE WILL REMAIN
GENERAL SECRETARY AFTER THE 25TH PARTY CONGRESS DUE NEXT
YEAR. THERE COULD BE A SERIOUS ILLNESS WHICH IS NOT
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EVIDENT IN BREZHNEVS BEHAVIOUR AND APPEARANCE OVER A
FEW DAYS. BUT THE EVIDENCE DURING THE PRIME MINISTERS
VISIT SUGGESTS THAT HE IS ON TOP FOR NOW.

END TEXT. MCAULIFFE

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

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